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AUTHOR	Kussrow, Paul G.
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ABSTRACT

Community problems are often so immense that community colleges can only respond effectively by forming organizational partnerships. The key to successful partnerships is communication among agencies; once an appreciation of each organization's capabilities is reached, community needs can be identified and responsive strategies can be designed. As resources and expertise are shared in areas of overlapping services, activities and staff time can be focused to expand each agency's original area of service. Other benefits include reduced costs, better use of existing building, staff, equipment, and other resources, non-duplication of services, and lower taxes. Before organizational partnerships can occur, however, there must be a mutual belief in the need for a partnership; an understanding of each party's needs and constraints; an understanding of each partner's role; an appreciation of the structure, staff partners, funding and size of the other partner; a continued focus on mutual benefits; developed strategies; an awareness of existing commitments; mutually developed goals and measurable objectives; and periodic evaluation of partnership agreements. Partnerships currently in place in North Carolina include: (1) Mitchell Community College and Morresville Graded Schools share typing classrooms and a computer center; (2) Caldwell Community College and Caldwell County are partners in a campaign to raise funds to construct a civic/performing arts center; (3) Catawba Valley Community College developed a horticulture technology program with the help of local business owners; (4) Wilkes Community College Small Business Center works in partnership with state and local government, colleges, universities, financial institutions, accountants, attorneys, and other private enterprises in promoting assistance to small business firms; and (5) Gaston College in partnership with Lincoln County schools and the Economic Development Commission of Lincoln County, provides specialized technical and vocational lessons for 11th and 12th graders. Contains six references. (KP)

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Why Community Colleges Need Organizational Partnerships

Paul G. Kussrow
Florida Atlantic University

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WHY COMMUNITY COLLEGES NEED ORGANIZATIONAL PARTNERSHIPS

Community problems are so immense that most community college based educators can not adequately define them much less effectively respond. As the building blocks of our society (i.e., family, school, church, and community) come under greater pressure the need for new organizational partnerships can no longer be considered an option for the practicing educator. Instead, they are a necessity.

No single social institution whether it be education, the family, government, religion, law, or commerce can alone respond effectively to the critical and complex social problems we face as a nation (Myran, 1975). The problems and the answers are larger than any one social building block or institution. No single organization or group has ever been able to address all the problems and concerns of a community (Kerns & Stanley, 1982). No longer can we view the community as individuals who have unrelated needs that are area specific to an organization's goals and service offerings. Rather, what we are confronted with are community needs that are inter-related to all the life concerns of all citizens. Instead of concentrating on what we as isolated community colleges are providing, we have to assess what needs are not being met for the entire community.

Many needs fall outside the mission or area of responsibility of the individual agencies, and these needs -- both individual and community -- largely go unserved or unnoticed (Kerns & Stanley, 1982). One has to search long and hard to find any community college

whose personnel will tell you they have sufficient resources (money, staff, facilities,) to meet the needs of their students and community clients. To the contrary, most colleges are doing more with less than any time in their history. Maintaining existing programs without loss of student and client services is the immediate goal ever before our eyes. But yet in this very climate of programmatic conservatism the concept of organizational partnerships, propelled by its economic logic, is being rediscovered.

Two extremely important results occur when agencies and groups join together in partnership: the needs, issues, problems and concerns of the entire community are viewed from a perspective rarely taken by a college. Rather than the [post-secondary] agencies determining that they can only serve specific clients or needs, they look at the total needs and determine their capacity and capabilities that can be adapted to meet the needs (Kerns & Stanley, 1982).

As with the concept of citizen participation the level of organizational partnerships span a continuum. Entry level relationships include; networks, coordination, and cooperation amongst the college and other educating agencies. Higher level involvement is reflected in collaboration, and true community partnerships. But before such intricate structures can be achieved the basic element of <u>trust</u> must be established. Our country's recent history of organizational isolationism has created a generation of college and agency personnel who know not a "sense of community."

These individuals are products of a time of plenty when both their education and career ascension occurred when the need to communicate and cooperate with other was not taught or required to be successful. Now they find themselves and their college or agency in positions of leadership faced with problems that can't be solved only on their own agencies merits, resources, and expertise. The draw-bridge needs to be lowered over this new moat of modern isolationism. If anything we to often see other community agencies as potential threats to the college's supply lines, client pool, and status within the community. But in spite of this organizational "paranoia" a growing number of risk takers are reaping the benefits of organizational partnerships.

When success occurs, three elements become evident; 1) a dedication by all parties to see that services to people are maximized, 2) an effective on-going communication among the parties toward that end, and 3) a mutual good faith in carrying on all planning, implementation, and communication efforts (Martin & Wood, 1975). The keystone to successful partnerships is communication. Kerns and Stanley (1982) state that in all cases, the process used required that community groups and agencies be brought together to begin the communication that would or could result in partnerships and partnership arrangements.

As the convened groups communicate, the level of understanding, respect, and trust is enhanced. Most college representatives will find their new found agency colleagues to be capable and caring

professionals who truly want to improve the quality of life of all members of the community. Once this appreciation of each organization's capabilities is achieved, so that all members have the same working level of understanding, then it is time to move into the identification of the community's needs, wants, and concerns. Gollattscheck (1982) points out that in our rapidly changing communities of today a static needs assessment is out-of-date almost as soon as it is completed. This does not negate the sharing of our snap-shot needs assessment results conducted by individual agencies but rather calls for a unified community analysis. In such an analysis not only should student, client, and community needs and problems be considered, but it requires a knowledge of educating community's strengths and resources as well. Thus the convening and communication of and by community groups sets the stage for resource identification and eventual sharing.

Once this information is compiled and disseminated to all interested parties then and only then can responsive partnership strategies be designed to deal with the identified problems. The targeting of specific resources (time, personnel, programs,), as enumerated by measurable objectives, results in appropriate and accurate responses to community problems.

Additionally, as resources and expertise are shared in the areas of overlapping services each agency, now relieved of some responsibility, is able to devote the "freed-up" capacity to expand

its area of service (Kerns & Stanley, 1982). This fringe benefit effect is a hidden feature that in itself can justify why any community college based educator should become involved in organizational partnerships.

This cycle of communication, resource identification, allocation and re-evaluation results in a system where the role of each provider of educational services is clarified in light of educational needs. Those very students, clients, and service programs which were so jealously graded can now be better served from a community partnership approach than from an individual organizational approach.

Benefits to the Involved Organization Will Include:

1. reduced cost
2. better use of existing building, staff, equipment and other resources
3. non-duplication of services/or facilities
4. lower taxes, bond issues or milliages request
5. identification of the best educating agency to deliver services
6. more services at the most convenient location
7. more effective program through co-programming

Circumstances That Need to Exist for Organization Partnerships to Occur are;

1. mutual belief in the importance and the need for partnerships
2. an understanding of each parties needs and constrains
3. understanding of the role of each partner, i.e., who will do what

4. appreciation of the structure, staff partners, funding and size of the other partner(s)
5. a continued focus on the mutual benefits that will result in partnerships. Downplaying of differences. Look for win-win situations for identified common concerns.
6. developed strategies that bring people and potential partners together
7. an awareness of existing commitments
8. mutually developed goals and measurable objectives for cooperative efforts
9. periodic evaluation and review of the partnership agreements (Arizona, 1980)

Practicing community college educators must remember what distinguishes them from all other post secondary movements and that is the term community. The Latin derivative is communis meaning fellowship or common feelings. Malcomn S. Knowles (1980) states "...a true community college connotes an institution that has developed beyond an isolated entity into an institution seeking full partnership with its community." Let us get in common with our fellow community based colleagues through the process component known as organizational partnerships. Such partnerships are already in place at a number of colleges. The following examples of organizational partnerships are provided for your review and easy

access. If you should desire to learn more information about these partnerships contact the site directly.

ORGANIZATIONAL PARTNERSHIPS

EXAMPLE #1

Description of Host College.

Mitchell Community College, Morresville Extension Center, 219 North Academy Street, Mooresville, N.C. 28115; phone (AC 704) 663-1923; Hans P. Heymann, Extension Director. The College is one of fifty-eight public two year institutions comprising the State's system of community colleges. Curriculum offerings include vocational, technical, and college transfer programs, as well as various continuing education and community service offerings. The main campus is located in Statesville, North Carolina.

Description of Mitchell's Organizational Partnership.

In the fall of 1988, the Mitchell Community College Morresville Extension Center and Mooresville Graded Schools began serious dialogues about articulating and exploring ways the two organizations could better serve their respective students. The resultant school-college partnership being formed under this articulation effort has already resulted in firm resource sharing. The public school students come to the College's Center with their teacher during morning hours in order to make use of the College's IBM computers while the College in turn has been given access to the

school's electronic typewriters at the Senior High School for evening adult typing classes. Future efforts project expanded resource-facility sharing and cooperative programming. Another way the Center is implementing partnership practices is through its community services area. Given new State Department of Community Colleges guidelines, funding formulas for this category are no longer based solely on headcount, and therefore the Center can utilize the flexibility of this funding in order to share, mobilize, and bring in necessary resources to meet identified, local community needs.

Example #2

Description of Host College.

Caldwell Community College and Technical Institute, Caldwell Campus, Highway 321 South, 1000 Hickory Boulevard, Hudson, N.C. 28638, Contact Person: Rebecca B. Crawford, RN, Nurse Educator, (704) 728-4323; 396-3311; 264-7670

Caldwell Community College and Technical Institute opens its doors to any adult desiring to learn. The college is committed to providing quality, inexpensive, learning opportunities to meet the needs of the community at facilities located within commuting distance.

Diploma, Associate in Applied Science, Associate in Arts, and Associate in Science programs are offered. In addition, numerous continuing education courses are offered to meet more specific needs of the local citizens.

The institution began in 1964. Curriculum and continuing education programs combined produce an average student enrollment of 2,300-2,500 per year. During any given year, some 10,000-12,000 different people take at least one course with the college. The college employs approximately 140 full-time and 600 part-time personnel.

Description of Caldwell's Organizational Partnership.

The County of Caldwell lacks a multi-purpose assembly facility that can provide a central meeting place as well as cultural, artistic and educational opportunities for any community organization desiring such accommodations. Existing facilities are not sufficient to house major business and industrial seminars, workshops, trade exhibitions and merchandise markets. This results in many missed opportunities to attract visitors to Caldwell County. The construction of the civic center would provide a place for county residents to enjoy events that have not before been possible. A proposed 23,800 square foot facility would include an 850 fixed seat auditorium that can be sub-divided for smaller audiences, a proscenium stage with full flyloft, and an orchestra pit. To be located on the campus of CCC & TI, the facility will have a large lobby area with moveable interior walls that convert the lobby into smaller meeting or seminar rooms. In addition, the lobby will be used for banquets with a seating capacity of 360.

The center will be ideal for business and industry seminars, banquets, civic, professional and educational group meetings, as well as conferences, social events and the performing arts. Meetings and shows would bring hundreds of people to the area, resulting in additional dollars being spent in county motels, restaurants and stores. This increased economic activity will benefit all citizens. of the county. Authorized by the Board of Trustees of Caldwell Community College and Technical Institute, a campaign was authorized. Not only will support be sought from the Board of Trustees and Foundation Board of CCC & TI, but a campaign is being conducted among the faculty, staff and administration of the college. In addition to seeking support from local, state and national foundations, the campaign is also being conducted among individuals and businesses in Caldwell County.

The "Partners in Progress" Campaign is designed to raise funds for the construction, equipping and furnishing of a civic center for the citizens of Caldwell County. Also included in the campaign are funds for endowment needs for the multi-purpose facility. The campaign has a goal of $1,000,000 and a challenge goal of $1,650,000.

The theme "Partners in Progress" reflects the partnership between citizens, business, industry, civic, and professional groups. The college will continue to provide services and facilities to meet the needs of all citizens of Caldwell county.

Example #3

Description of Host College.

Catawba Valley Community College, Rt. 3 Box 283, Hickory N.C. 28603, (704) 327-9124, Darrell C. Kiser-Program Head, Horticulture Technology Program. Two programs are offered. A one year night certificate program for persons employed in the industry who desire formal education or additional education and can't come to day classes. A two year associate employment or a second career position.

Description of Catawba Valley's Organizational Partnership.

The two year program was formed in the mid 1960's at the request of area industry leaders who saw their industry and its employment need expanding. A local advisory committee was formed and is still in existence which is composed of horticulture business owners and managers, plus agriculture/horticulture teachers and high school guidance counselors, agricultural/horticultural agency's representatives, community citizens knowledgeable in the field of horticulture, current students, and graduates of the program. This committee, which originally assisted in the formation of the program, now reviews every facet of the program and makes recommendations concerning curriculum content, course content, facility needs, any changes in the aforementioned items and future directions the programs should pursue.

Based on the local advisory committee's recommendation, a one year night program was established to meet the needs of the community which showed the horticultural industry had expanded so fast it had to hire untrained persons. These employees could now work during the day at their respective positions and come to college at night to get the needed formal education in horticulture. Also those who sought updated horticultural education could retain their positions during the day and be retrained at the college night classes, thus exemplifying the lifelong education process. An additional group which wanted to maintain their non-horticultural day positions could now train for a second career at night. A third group, persons almost at retirement age, could also be trained for positions which would supplement their retirement and social security incomes. Thus an age group from 18 to 82 exists in the night program. This partnership has resulted in increased services and training to Catawba Valley residents.

Example #4

Description of Host College.

Wilkes Community College, Small Business Center, P.O. Box 120, Wilkesboro, NC 28697-0120 Contact: Kathryn B. Reese (919) 667-7136 ext 320.

Small business is a vital element in the local economy and a major contributor to the economic well being of northwest North Carolina. The Small Business Center has been established by the N.C.

Community College System and Wilkes Community College to serve the unique educational and training needs of small business owners, potential owners, managers and employees. The Center is committed to serving small business through training and educational programs, counseling services, and a variety of other assistance.

Description of Wilkes' Organizational Partnership.

The Small Business Center program is designed to increase the number of successful small businesses, increase their profitability and increase the total number of people employed in our area. The Small Business Center network involves all levels of business and civic organizations. It works in partnership with state and local government, colleges, and universities, banks and financial institutions, accountants, and attorneys, and other private enterprises in promoting assistance to small business firms. Strong organizational partnerships with the Chamber of Commerce in Alleghany, Ashe, and Wilkes counties, and assistance from the Small Business Administration enhance the program efforts. The Small Business Center offers an integrated Small Business Management program providing business people with the opportunity to heighten their skills and to strive for excellence in accomplishing company goals. Partnership services now include;

1) PROGRAMS - Including seminars, courses, and workshops offered for:

a) Continuing Education, b) College Credit, c) Self-Supporting

2) RESOURCE CENTER - Including a library of current information for in-house use and loan purposes. At the Ashe and Alleghany branches of Wilkes Community College a bibliography of materials is available so request for information can be honored. The resource information includes:

a) Small Business Administration literature; b) management information; c) data on local economy; d) textbooks; e) business periodicals; f) self-study guides on small business topics; g) video and audio tapes; h) personal computer.

3) CONSULTANT NETWORK - The Small Business Center provides assistance to individuals in an initial consultation or on a referral basis. The Small Business Center offers these services in the belief that better management leads to a more successful, profitable small business and that small business is an essential ingredient for improving the local and national economy.

Example #5

Description of Host College.

Gaston College (Lincoln County Campus) Lincoln County School of Technology, 1 Timken Dr., Lincolnton NC 28092 (704) 732-4084. Dr. Dennis Perry,

The Lincoln Campus provides opportunities for not only local citizens to avail themselves of continued education, but also high school students attending the School of Technology.

Description of Gaston's Organizational Partnership.

Gaston College, in Partnership with Lincoln Co. Schools and the Economic Development Commission of Lincoln County entered into an innovative project which resulted in the Lincoln County School of Technology. Students in grades 11 & 12 from all 3 High Schools are transported there daily for specialized lessons in vocational and technical skill. Gaston College offers classes there that enable the students to advance and earn college credits. Also during the day, Gaston provides GED instruction for citizens in the area. At night, classes are taught for students and/or the community and the facility is constantly booked by local business and industry for special meetings and events. This partnership has resulted in greater services to the service area residents and better use of facilities.

In Summary

Is it not time for new systems to be designed that will bring all learning institutions in our communities together in exemplary organizational partnerships? Our days as isolated institutions are limited. Let us act now and look toward possible partnerships that best can serve our students, area clients, and our communities.

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